

Governor's Early Childhood Initiative Summary

In order to reach the goal that all young children in Kentucky are healthy and safe, possess the foundation that will enable school and personal success, and live in strong families that are supported and strengthened within their communities, 25% of Kentucky's Phase I Tobacco Settlement dollars will fund the early childhood initiative.

Assuring Maternal and Child Health

Healthy Babies Workgroup: To plan and implement a public awareness / education campaign to educate the public about fetal alcohol syndrome, the impact of substance abuse on pregnancy and childrearing, the importance of smoking cessation, and about healthy lifestyle choices that help babies to be born healthy. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley - 502/564-2611 ext. 457.

- ❑ Workgroup of approximately 75 people has met monthly beginning in July.
- ❑ Plan approved by Early Childhood Development Authority January 30, 2001.
- ❑ RFP distributed May 1, 2001.
- ❑ Contract awarded July 2001.
- ❑ Run campaign August through December 2001.

Folic Acid Campaign: To prevent the high incidence of Neural Tube Defects (also known as spina bifida or open spine) in Kentucky by providing access to the vitamin Folic Acid, a known preventive measure.

FACT: Kentucky's rate of neural tube defects is 1 1/2 times the national average. An estimated 70% of such birth defects are preventable through the administration of folic acid prior to and in the early prenatal period. Based on Kentucky's incidence of neural tube defects and the average lifetime cost associated with the condition, the annual cost to Kentuckians is estimated to be \$55 million dollars annually. Contact: Dr. Steve Davis – 502/564-4830 or Linda Lancaster – 502/564-2154.

- ❑ Folic Acid tablets purchased and distributed through all 120 county health departments and through the offices of the Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs.
- ❑ Folic Acid Nursing Coordinators trained to promote folic acid supplementation and counseling program in all 120 county health departments.
- ❑ 39,909 women have received folic acid supplements and intensive counseling through Local Health Department folic acid supplementation and counseling program services.
- ❑ 12 regional training programs for health care professionals conducted.
- ❑ Folic Acid Educational Kits mailed to 3,400 physicians and nurse midwives statewide.
- ❑ Kentucky Folic Acid Partnership agencies report 580 community and professional activities in Fiscal Year 2001 reaching 49,870 participants statewide.

Substance Abuse Treatment Program for Pregnant and Post-partum Women: To assist Medicaid eligible women with current or prior substance abuse problems to bear healthy babies and to remain free of substance abuse behaviors in the future. Contact: Mike Townsend - 502/564-2880.

- ❑ During FY 2001 Community mental health center contracts have been let to provide “provider incentives” to community mental health centers or subcontractors. These provider incentives will be paid when pregnant women complete a substance abuse prevention protocol or have been involved in substance abuse treatment up through delivery of the infant. The purpose of the incentives was to assist community mental health centers in developing collaborative relationships primarily with health care providers serving pregnant women in order to establish substance abuse screening and referral procedures for this population.
- ❑ Approximately 300 pregnant women with a substance abuse problem received treatment services from the community mental health center system during FY 2001.

Universal Newborn Hearing Screening: To screen all newborns prior to hospital discharge. To assist hospitals to implement universal hearing screening. To provide additional state staff to coordinate a universal hearing screening program.

FACT: 32 states currently have universal newborn screening laws. At the rate of 3: 1000 births, hearing difficulties are the most common sensory birth defect. The average \$20 cost per child for a reliable hearing screening before hospital discharge is covered by KCHIP and by Medicaid for eligible populations. Early detection and appropriate tracking and follow-up are vital to the development of the child. The cost of educating a deaf child in a residential program is approximately \$27,000 as compared to \$6000 annually for the child who is diagnosed early and served in a typical classroom. Contact: Michelle King – 502/595-4459 ext. 323 and 877-757-4237 or Eric Friedlander – 502-595-4459 ext. 271.

- ❑ Kentucky Infants’ Sound Start (KISS) fully implemented beginning January 2001. To date, 23,937 infants have been screened.
- ❑ Thirty-three hospitals received grants to purchase equipment.
- ❑ System is in place to refer families for follow-up testing within 3 months and intervention within 6 months.
- ❑ Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs is partnering with the Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing and other public and private entities statewide to provide outreach to families, health departments, physicians, schools and other community based organizations.

Immunization Program for Underinsured Children: To achieve 100% immunization coverage by age three.

FACT: Currently 17% of children ages birth to three years old are underinsured. The purchase of vaccines to cover this population of children who are non-Medicaid and non-KCHIP eligible will increase access to immunizations. Contact: Gary Bevill – 502/564-7243.

- ❑ Fully implemented August 2000.
- ❑ Training has been provided to all physician participants.
- ❑ Over 246,000 vaccine doses distributed to physician since July 2000, 10,000 children immunized

Eye Examinations For Children: To legislate the requirement for all children to submit evidence of an eye examination (not a screening) no later than Jan. 1 of the first year of public school entry. The current requirement for a physical examination (704 KAR 4 :020) does not include an eye examination. Funds are available for assistance to children who are neither Medicaid nor KCHIP eligible and who do not have sufficient resources to pay for the cost of an eye examination from the Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs.

FACT: Screening alone often misses visual difficulties such as amblyopia which have the potential for reversal if diagnosed and treated before the age of five. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley – 502/564-2611 ext. 457, Eric Friedlander 502-595-4459 ext. 271, Jackie Ferguson – 800-232-1160, or Terry Vance – 502-564-3678.

- ❑ Executive Orders are in place.
- ❑ Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs is working with health departments, the Family Resource Youth Service Centers, and Kentucky Optometric Association to identify families between 200-250% of poverty to receive help in paying for the eye exam.
- ❑ 285 optometrists/ophthalmologists have contracted with the Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs to conduct the eye exams. Optometrists/ophthalmologists are reimbursed at \$40/exam and the family is asked to pay a \$5 co-pay.
- ❑ 71 children have accessed the program.

Supporting Families

Voluntary Home Visiting Program: Provide voluntary home visitation program for first time parents who are at-risk.

FACT: The highest number of reported child abuse cases (43%) involve children four years old and younger. In evaluations of multiple home visiting programs, participating children exhibited enhanced levels of health and development. Contact: Dr. Steve Davis – 502/564-4830 or Curt Rowe – 502-564-2154.

- ❑ Now operational in 52 counties, with 3,800 plus families enrolled.
- ❑ Training completed in all 52 counties.
- ❑ Thirty thousand home visits made July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2001
- ❑ Fifty additional counties rolled out July 1, 2001
- ❑ Training in process for staff from the fifty new counties
- ❑ Six local technical assistance personnel hired and trained.
- ❑ Comprehensive outreach and networking to eliminate duplication and efficiently match families with the service programs.
- ❑ Partnering with other community for cross referral
- ❑ Budget based on estimated participation percentages: 50% Medicaid, 50% Non-Medicaid
Current participation percentages: 88% Medicaid, 12% Non-Medicaid.

Enhancing Early Care and Education

Access to Child Care Subsidy: To increase the reimbursement to childcare centers and licensed family daycare homes who provide care to low-income families by increasing the percentage of eligible children.

FACT: By increasing the eligibility from 160% of the federal poverty level to 170% FPL, an estimated 12,000 *additional* children will be covered by eligibility guidelines thereby increasing access to care for low-income families. Contact: Mike Cheek – 502/564-2524.

- ❑ Moved to 165% of poverty October 2000.
- ❑ 54,716 children served from April – June 2001.
- ❑ Recommended \$3M to be used to serve those who need child care assistance up to the 165% of poverty and not limited to serving only those who are between 160-165% of poverty

Quality Rating System for Childcare: STARS for KIDS NOW: To raise the level of quality in childcare by offering a system of incentives and rewards based on identified characteristics associated with positive outcomes for children and families and by offering technical assistance to achieve quality indicators.

FACT: Children cared for in high quality settings performed significantly better in math, language, and social skills at school entrance than did their peers in programs of poor quality, according to a study published by the University of North Carolina. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley or Teri Mehler – 502/564-2611 ext. 457.

- ❑ Piloting of the STARS for KIDS NOW was conducted in 17 counties across the state January – June 2001. 88 childcare centers volunteered to participate in the pilot, with 77 receiving a rating, 4,200 children receiving enhanced care in these centers.
- ❑ 18 Quality Coordinators, located in the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, provided technical assistance to Type I centers to assist in participation in STARS for KIDS NOW.
- ❑ Regulations have been approved.
- ❑ Voluntary rollout for childcare centers statewide began July 2001.

Scholarship Fund for Childcare Providers: A scholarship fund administered through the Ky. Higher Education Assistance Authority (who has similar funds for Occupational Therapists, military personnel, and others) available to those who work in childcare or as assistants in preschool classrooms at least 20 hours weekly. The funds assist childcare personnel in moving through a credentialing system that begins at entry level and proceeds through post-secondary education.

FACT: The quality of childcare is closely associated with the education and training levels of the childcare providers. Childcare workers are among the most poorly paid individuals in the workforce and therefore need assistance and incentive to increase their educational achievement and to permit workers to move up the career ladder in early childhood. Contact: Nancy Newberry – 502-564-8099

- ❑ Regulations are in place.
- ❑ FY01 – Two terms beginning January 2001 - there were 516 scholarships awarded representing 25 public colleges and universities and 5 private.
FY02 – Fall term 2001 – there were 532 scholarships awarded at 23 public colleges and 5 private.
- ❑ Ten professional development counselors have been hired and trained. The professional development counselors reside in the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies across the state.

Increased Licensing Personnel: Additional licensing personnel dedicated specifically to childcare who will bring expertise to upgrade childcare quality by having smaller caseloads consisting only of childcare facilities.

FACT: Present caseloads average 100 facilities per worker (exceeding national standard of 50 facilities) and include facilities other than childcare. High case numbers preclude anything but monitoring for compliance with minimal standards and leave no time for assessing quality. Few workers have backgrounds in early childhood. Contact: Mike Cheek – 502/564-2524 or Amy Stiber - 502-564-2800.

- ❑ New Division of Licensed Child Care established.
- ❑ New licensing surveyors hired and participating in on-going training. (4 Regional Program Managers, 10 STAR Team Raters, and 34 Child Care Surveyors)
- ❑ Working with Office of Early Childhood Development, Division of Child Care, and Kentucky Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies to implement the STARS for KIDS NOW quality rating system.
- ❑ Three quality raters from each of the four licensing regions to do ratings for STARS for KIDS NOW.

Healthy Start in Childcare: To provide personnel to train and educate childcare providers and parents in health, safety, nutrition, and the benefits of early intervention. Emphasis is also placed on the prevention of communicable diseases in-group settings.

FACT: There are approximately 2,040 licensed childcare facilities in Kentucky, and 814 certified family day care homes that will benefit from assistance to upgrade health and safety conditions and staff / parent training. In a random sampling of 330 licensed centers by the Louisville Courier Journal, 39% of sampled centers had health and safety violations and 73% of centers evidenced violation of state regulations at least once in the past two years. Contact: Dr. Steve Davis – 502/564-4830 or Sue Bell – 502-564-3527.

- ❑ 88 trained Healthy Start Consultant are available to provide services and all 120 counties.
- ❑ Networking with other agencies and entities, which work with childcare centers and family childcare homes, has begun and will continue.
- ❑ 6050 outreach activities (letters, brochures, newspaper) have been conducted.
- ❑ 2122 consultations by phone or on-site have been completed.
- ❑ Consultants have been trained on early childhood social/emotional well-being and will implement the DECA (Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment) tool in October. The DECA is an observation assessment tool for children ages 2-5 that can be used by parents and teachers to help build resiliency in children.
- ❑ 15 intervention specialists in community mental health centers have been trained in early childhood mental health for children with identified social/emotional needs.

Community Early Childhood Council Funding: Agencies and individuals, identified in legislation, will form community councils to improve the lives of children and families. First biennium funding will be devoted to improving the quality and availability of childcare in low resource/high need areas.

FACT: Approximately 103,000 of Kentucky's young children are in childcare. According to national standards, much of Kentucky's childcare is judged to be of poor quality and yet providers often cannot afford the expense associated with increasing quality. Funding through councils will offer seed money to make needed improvements according to specified criteria through the use of non-recurring dollars. Contact: Darlene Goodrich – 502-564-8099.

- ❑ The Early Childhood Development Authority defined a service area as no smaller than a county.
- ❑ Family Resource Youth Service Centers and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies are working with existing entities in counties to convene the Community Early Childhood Councils.
- ❑ Request for Proposals were released March 2001 with 93 grant applications received May 2001.
- ❑ 15 councils approved for funding July 2001, with 61 councils given the chance to revise and resubmit RFP's.

Establishing the Support Structure

Early Childhood Development Authority: To receive and disburse funds and to coordinate the development of programs supported by the funds. The Early Childhood Development Authority will merge four existing Councils for efficient coordination of issues related to early childhood. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley – 502/564-2611 ext. 457.

- ❑ Appointed by Governor Patton and meeting on a monthly basis to conduct business.

Business Council: To involve the corporate community and local governments in supporting issues of importance to working families in Kentucky. The Business Council will be composed of business and community leaders who have demonstrated an interest in early childhood and families in the workplace. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley – 502/564-2611 ext. 457.

- ❑ In progress, to be appointed.

Professional Development Council: To work with existing entities to create a seamless system of education and training for early childhood providers, beginning with an entry level credential and proceeding through a Master's degree. Contact: Nancy Newberry – 502-564-8099.

- ❑ Appointed by Governor Patton and met 5 times between February and August 2001.
- ❑ Five workgroups have been studying relevant issues since August 2000 and made reports for the Professional Development Council in May and June 2001.
- ❑ Action being taken on workgroup reports and recommendations.

Evaluation of Initiative: To ensure effective use of funds in achieving targeted outcomes across settings statewide. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley – 502/564-2611 ext. 457.

- ❑ Contract with UK/UL has been completed and the research team has begun their work.

Program Improvements

Training: Requires the Cabinet for Families and Children to set training requirements for all providers of childcare who receive a state childcare subsidy. Contact: Mike Cheek-502/564-2524.

- ❑ Relatives providing care must meet same requirements as registered home providers beginning April 2001.
- ❑ Regulation filed to require training for registered providers in July 2001.
- ❑ Contract pending with KACCRA for expanding services to registered providers.
- ❑ Healthy Start in Child Care providing assistance to licensed, certified, and enrolled providers relating to safety and nutrition.

Child Safety in Childcare: Allows the Cabinet for Families and Children (through Cabinet for Health Services Office of Inspector General) to assess penalties to facilities when an inspector finds a situation that poses an immediate threat to the health, safety, or welfare of children. In addition to a hearing, an informal dispute resolution process is established prior to an action that could result in the closure of a childcare facility. Contact: Mike Cheek-502/564-2524.

- ❑ Cabinet for Health Services implemented the civil penalties and informal dispute resolution for licensed child care facilities.